

How to Help: Family Separation Edition

In May, the Trump Administration announced a new “zero tolerance” policy, which has resulted in the criminal prosecution of thousands of individuals seeking asylum. While the adults are jailed and prosecuted, their children are ripped away and put into Office of Refugee Resettlement shelters, which are now overrun with very young children who have become “unaccompanied,” despite the fact that they came seeking asylum with a parent. More than 2,300 children have been separated from their parents, including infants. This is cruel, inhumane, and exceptionally harmful for already traumatized families. As a result of this policy, new shelters for children have opened near El Paso and one is proposed for downtown Houston for “tender age” children under 12. On June 20th, Mayor Sylvester Turner came out strongly opposed to the family separation policy and indicated that the city would do everything it could to stop any new shelters for separated children in Houston.

On June 20, President Trump signed an executive order that orders the detention of families who enter the United States seeking asylum to be detained in family detention centers while they fight their asylum cases. HILSC and partners decry the use of family detention, which further traumatizes children and asylum seekers. While the active policy of separating families has stopped, there is no plan or system to reunite the thousands already separated. Most recently, a federal judge in California ordered the government to reunite parents with their children aged under five within 14 days, all others within 30 days, and prohibits parents from being deported without their children. Here are a few ways you can work to fight these policies and their impact locally.

GIVE

Support the organizations that provide **direct legal services** to unaccompanied and separated children and their parents, helping them reunite. In **Houston** those organizations are:

- **Children:** Kids In Need of Defense; Catholic Charities’ Cabrini Center; Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights; ABA’s Children’s Immigration Law Academy
- **Adults:** HILSC’s Deportation Defense Houston project (YMCA International Services, South Texas College of Law Houston, Baker Ripley, Justice for our Neighbors); Tahirih Justice Center

Around the state, these organizations are providing direct services to separated children: Refugee and Immigrant Center for Education and Legal Services (RAICES) (statewide); Human Rights Initiative of North Texas (Dallas); ABA’s ProBar (Rio Grande Valley); Diocesan Migrant & Refugee Services (DRMS) (El Paso)

Support leaders of local **advocacy & litigation**

- Texas Civil Rights Project (TCRP)
- American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Texas
- United We Dream
- Texas Organizing Project

VOLUNTEER

- **Lawyers** can take a pro bono asylum case with:
 - Human Rights First
 - Tahirih Justice Center
 - Kids In Need of Defense (Houston) – contact Claire Doutre at cdoutre@supportkind.org
 - Catholic Charities (Houston) – contact ProBono@CatholicCharities.org
- **Anyone** can become a “child advocate” to work one-on-one with unaccompanied children with the Young Center for Immigrant Children’s Rights. Contact Rachel Wootten at rwootten@theyoungcenter.org.

ADVOCACY OPPORTUNITY (CHANGING DAILY!) AND MORE INFORMATION LIVES HERE

<https://www.houstonimmigration.org/how-to-help-family-separation-edition/>